3

DESCENT IDEOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL DESCENT GROUPS

Descent Ideology

The Muduga descent organization is defined by the patrilineal descent ideology in terms of a common agnatic substance inherited from their paternal ancestors The notion of sharing and transmission of this agnatic substance across generation forms the basis of descent among the Mudugas Social unit thus comprising of all members sharing a common descent ideology traced from a particular ancestor forms the descent group Though people claim to be descendants of a particular ancestor, they however, could not trace their exact genealogy towards the founding ancestors, and clansmen believe that they were related as brothers and continue as 'brothers' into the future The basic unit of kinship among the Mudugas, are the patnhneal clans and is known after the name of the particular founding ancestor and the clansmen refer to themselves as belonging to one *koottam*, meaning group People also use the *term pattan kalu*,[1] meaning 'ancestor-leg,' to refer to the descent line traced after an ancestor Thus when people say "*emma manji patron kalu*", it means that they belong to the descent line (leg) of the ancestor. Manji, and believe that all members who trace descent from *Manji pattan* belongs to one *koottam* They may also use the term *makka* meaning 'children' to refer to descendants of a particular ancestor (clan members) Thus, "*emma palli makka*" means we are children (descendants) of *palli*

Two or more patnhneal *koottam* who consider each others as 'brothers' group together to form a still wider kin group called *kulam*, whose members are not restricted to a particular locality, but are dispersed in different hamlets or *ooru*[2] Thus, among the Mudugas, it is the patnhneal *koottam* that is associated with a particular locality and tend to be localized giving nse to local descent group Other than being a wider patnlateral group, the *kulam* has little functional value and there are no instances where its members aggregate forming a corporate group

Among the Mudugas membership to descent group is attained through birth and the people do believe that the agnatic substance which is the essence and basis of their descent group, *koottam*, is inherited through the male parent The notion of parentage is based on filiation, and the reckoning of genealogical link is given much importance when speaking of descent link or descent membership among the Mudugas Through this male link, all members of the clan share the clan blood (*chora*) transmitted from the ancestor and it forms the basis of common identity and heritage among the agnates Since members who are of the same clan share then 'same blood' *{ore chora*), people are prohibited from entering into marriage with women of the same clan who share the clan blood and they consider it as incestuous The notion of same clan or *koottam* forms the core of Muduga kinship and is materially manifested in the physical substance (blood and semen) which is passed from father to child This provides the conceptual basis for a system of patrilineal descent Since children are borne from agnatic substance, they are assigned automatic membership to the father's descent group The pnnciple inherent in the transmission of clan substance from father to child is clearly depicted in their famous saying "*auvai vannu vithu, awwai vannu kadu*" which means that father is the seed and mother is the land Just, the way by which the genetic essence is inherited by the seeding or plant from the seeds, similarly the child also inherits the agnatic substance from its father and not from the mother

There are controversies related to descent group membership or agnatic identity and the question of biological paternity Ramanan lives in Thaze-Abbannoor hamlet along with his brother and old mother Few members of Thaze-Abbannoor particularly Kaden and his close km consider Ramanan and his brother as non-agnates and often claim that they belong to the *koottam* of kattakadu hamlet and not to *Manji pattan koottam* of Thaze-Abbannoor They also trace an affinal link to Ramanan's father Kuppen However, Ramanan and his family strongly deny this by claiming an agnatic status Ramanan says that his FFM from Kattakadu hamlet was married to the elder brother of Chekidan (the then headman of Thaze-Abbannoor) But when she was pregnant, she was divorced by her husband and sent back to her natal hamlet where she delivered Mathan Mathan married from the *koottam* of Karara hamlet and was residing along with his wife's relatives at Karara But later due to a quarrel at Karara, Mathan left his wife and

came back to Thaze-Abbannoor and found shelter at his FyB, Chekidan's hut and stayed along with Chekidan. At that time Kaden's mother's mother (who was a widow) was staying at Thaze-Abbannoor along with Kaden's father Mullan's family. Chekidan made Mathan to marry Kaden's mother's mother and in that union Ramanan's father Kuppen was borne, who is thus MB for Kaden Though Kaden claims that Ramanan is his MBS and hence an affine for the Thaze-Abbannoor *koottam*, Ramanan strongly argues that his father is Chekidan's elder brother's grandson and hence a true agnatic member to the descent group of Thaze-Abbanoor

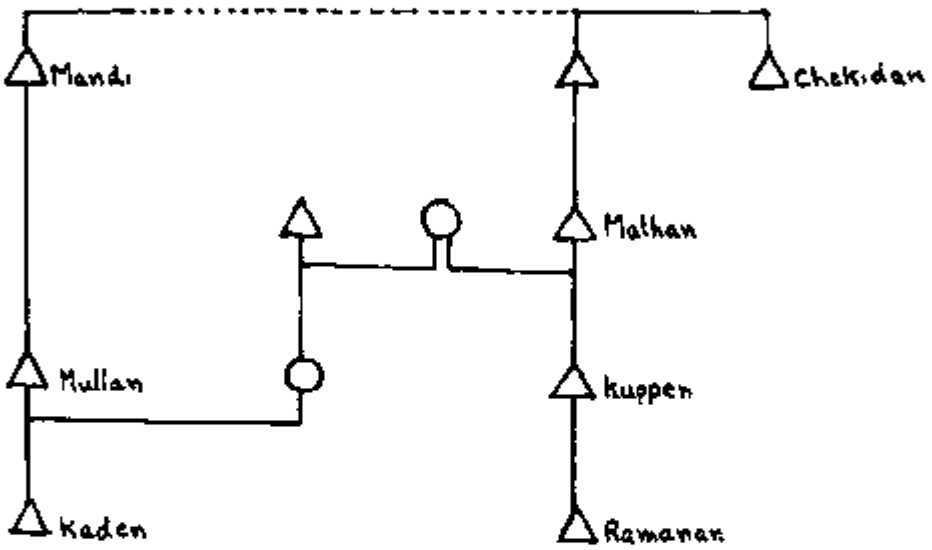

Fig 3 1 Genealogy showing relationship between Ramanan and Kaden

Another case regarding agnatic notion is that of Shanmukam who is the son of Chonoan of Mele-Thodukki hamlet, but permanently residing at Chitoor hamlet When Shanmukam's father died in his young age, his mother was married to Kali of Chitoor hamlet and he also came to Chitoor along with his mother and was brought up by his step father Shanmukam's mother in her second marriage with Kali is having three sons — Maruthan, Patti and Andi Maruthan is the present headman (*ooru moopan*) of Chitoor

But Shanmukam is not at all happy with the decision of the agnates of Chitoor, ignoring him and making Maruthan as the headman, and he is now strongly claiming the position for himself on the base that he is elder to Maruthan. But the agnates of Chitoor are very much against Shanmukam's argument and are not at all willing to give the *moopu* (position of headman) to Shanmukam just because he is not an agnatic member of Chitoor but borne to a man of another descent group (see Fig 3.2)

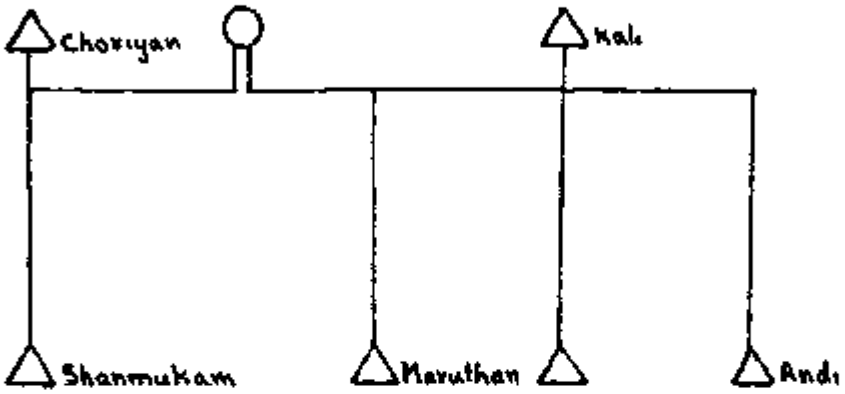

Fig 3 2 Genealogy showing relationship between Shanmukam and agnates of Chittoor hamlet

The above two cases clearly shows that among Mudugas, 'biological element' forms an important aspect and the basis for the inheritance of descent group membership The descent ideology rests on kinship relations based on biological ties and hence considered as the core meaning of descent

Though clan identity is built primarily on the natural fact of procreation, genealogical reckoning is not deep and people rarely could trace their exact genealogy beyond grand-parental generation However members of a clan consider themselves related as 'brothers' and try to identify own brothers and classificatory brothers as culturally equivalent and seldom make a distinction If asked, people say *"emma bahappa - sinnappa makka"*, meaning "we are children of 'father's elder brother – father's younger brother"

The patrilineal descent ideology along with virilocal marital residence of the patn kin forms the basic principle for the organization of local groups [3] The local group or hamlet is called the *ooru* A *koottam* is generally localised in an *ooru* or an *ooru* normally consists of agnatic members of a *koottam* and their spouses Mudugas consider that agnates should live together, share land and food and also co-operate in important activities Activities calling for collective action (mainly ancestral ceremonies, religious functions and other economic activities) are performed by the 'agnates as a whole' such that the *ooru* is conceived as a group of co-operative kinsmen It is through these activities that a *koottam* residing in the *ooru* maintains unity among its members[4] Property of the local descent group compnses the hamlet site, graveyard, farmland, water resources, hunting territory and grazing grasslands

Although a large number of clan members are likely to be resident in a single hamlet, at times clansmen are seen dispersed in two or more hamlets, such that in most cases a single hamlet consist of at least members belonging to two or more clan Descent groups among the Mudugas can be characterized as egalitarian such that all descent groups irrespective of numerical variations are of equal status

The following are some of the *koottams* (known after the name of the founding ancestor) existing in the Muduga hamlets of Attappady

Sl No	Name of the *ooru*	Names of descent groups (name after their respective founding ancestors)
1	Anakkal	Kozhi chellan, Parachellan, Vandichindan
2	Veettiyoor	Kozhichellan, Parachellan, Vandichindan
3	Pottikkal	Alhraman, Manchi pattan
4	Mele-Abbannoor	Palli pattan, Benthathnal, Paccha pattan

5.	Thaze-Abbannoor	Manchi pattam, Killa pattan, Kurumba pattan, Paruthi mala pattan, Kozhichellan
6	Chindakki	Thevilinka Pattan, Mavilinka Pattan
7.	Chitoor	Paccha Pattan
8	Muthikulam	Sambar
9	Kallamala	Pooja Pattan
10	Karuvara	Paruthi mala pattan, Koliyankarar
11	Thundoor	Karikotta Pattan, Mala pattan
12	Veeranoor	Alliraman, Kalla pattan

Since the members of a *koottam* are not wholly localised in one hamlet and are dispersed in different hamlets, it is impossible to specify the numerical size of each *koottam* Nevertheless, it is inferred that they differ among themselves in numerical size However, these numerical variation has no direct proportion to status or power and among the Mudugas all members irrespective of their descent group and residential group are considered similar

A person's primary loyalty is to his agnatic group and it is from this group he derives the greatest portion of his social identity From elder members, he receives guardianship and care in his young days He also receives rights to the resource of the land, a right to cultivate it, a share in them and other property, a house site when he marries, and other economic and ritual assistance on necessary occasions With the people of his clan he lives, works and participates on public occasions and his kmship ties with them are recognized as being of a strong and close kind

The descent group has the right over its members and individual choices are little, such that nobody can lead an mdependent hfe and live according to his own wish and will Every member has to abide by the norms of his km group and thus the norms of the society, and go according to the decision taken by his elder agnates It is the agnates as a group who take decision and carry out important matters for their clan members in each and every stages of their life When people often say "*mannukkum pennukkum sethan naalal thuna bedam*" (to unite with earth and women one needs support from people), it

clearly shows that life cycle rituals especially death and marriage ceremonies are occasions when one cannot do without the support of his close agnatic members.

Members of the agnatic group associated with a given locality tend to reside in the land owned by their clan and inherit rights to use spatially fixed resources and to cultivate the land All the members of the *ooru* tend to do cultivation in one area and after two or three years when the fertility of the soil reduces, they shift together to the next plot and each member clears the land as much as they can, and do the farming independently Close km select farm lands adjacent to each other for reason of co-ordinated group activities at the time of clearing, sowing, weeding, watching and harvesting Except huts and farm lands under cultivation, which are private property owned by individual family, all other areas belong to the descent group as a whole and members have equal nght to the resources of the clan's territory Land which is 'fallow' is not owned by anyone All the members enjoy equal right to land for grazing catties, collecting roots, tubers, fruits and other resources There is no restriction regarding the collection of roots and tubers and people are free to dig them out from anywhere, even from any farmland, but without causing any damage to the crops

Strong relationship exist between partilineal descent and land among the people Men marry and establish their families remaining in the locality of their fathers Such that, a patnhneal local group develops and persist through the generation The *ooru* and its land is the domicile of the patnhneal descent group and this agnatic descent group traditionally own this territory Thus, local group or the *ooru* is primarily a descent based group, because both descent and residence are recruitment for local descent group membership It is often a co-operative group with common interest and joint action for organising ceremonies and conducting its affairs

The hamlet or *ooru* acts as a corporate group of a political kind Residence in the *ooru* implies political allegiance to the local group associated with a particular descent group or *koottam* in whose name the hamlet is organized The *ooru moopan* or headman is the political leader of the hamlet and manages the affairs of the people residing in the hamlet He is also the head of the traditional tribal council in the hamlet *{ooru panchayath)* and he is supposed to have authonty over the members of the hamlet Thus all the coresident members of the local group or the hamlet, irrespective of descent

affiliation, maintain similar identity of locality and are considered full members of the hamlet *(oomkarar)* It is through the jurisdiction of *ooru moopan* that the *koottam* exercise control over its members and also the co-resident nonagnates,[5] treating them as sharing similar identity through locality, and thus all the members of the *ooru* are obliged to abide by the rules and norms of the *ooru moopan* All matters of significance like land disputes, fightings, and quarrels, thefts, elopements, adultery etc , are brought to his notice by the assistants (*bandari and kuruthala*) and the judgement will be made by the *moopan* The guilty one is found out after a prolonged deliberation in a joint meeting of the council members of the *ooru* headed by the *moopan* This meeting is known as *panchayat koodal* or they refer to it as *kalam bethu nayam peshi theerkal* Settlement of issues related to family quarrel or adultery are termed as *alan-pendu nayam peshi theerkal* The victims are asked to pay a fine proposed by the *panchayath* members and the amount of fine vanes according to the degree intensity or of the crime The amount collected as fine will be shared among the *panchayath* members or will be used for a common purpose by the *oorukarar* (hamlet members)

Ooru moopan is considered as the formal spokesman of the hamlet for outsiders and his more important duties are the protection of the rights and interest of the members of the hamlet No important affairs of the hamlet are carried out without the *moopan* and he is always informed and consulted well in advance In almost all occasions like marriage, death and other ceremonial functions, his presence and participation lends authenticity to the ritual and ceremonies The authority and power of exercised by the *ooru moopan* keeps the members of the local group closely connected and makes for the better ordering of human relations Referring to the responsibility of the *moopan,* people do say *"ooru pathu kudi kootti pidikira kadame moopanthu"*, meaning that it is the responsibility of the *ooru moopan* to hold together the families in the hamlet An insoluble conflict or quarrel may be the occasion of a family migration or schism in the group It is the duty and obligation of the *moopan* to settle the issue and assure group solidarity, cohesion and a feeling of oneness among the members However, it is to be mentioned here that, the *moopan* though a sole authority in all matters, will be supported and always given advice and suggestions by the elder members of his *koottam* Even though *moopan* enjoys authority and power, it is restricted to specific occasions, and in

common everyday affairs, he is considered one among the clansmen and is treated equal in all aspects with all other members of the *ooru*

If *ooru moopan* manages the political affairs of the hamlet, it is the priest or *mannukaran* (man of land) who enjoys full nght and control over the clan's religious matters and agricultural activities He is the formal priest of the *ooru* and is considered responsible for the resources of the land, its fertility and the agricultural activities All ceremonies and rituals connected with ancestral worship and other functions are performed by the *mannukaran* at the ancestor's hut *(peikoora)* which is believed to be the abode of their ancestors The ancestor referred by terms like *karudaivam, pattan or pet,*[6] are believed to hold a kind of control and guardianship over the descendants and protect them from diseases and disasters All members of the clan owe allegiance to their ancestral spirits and are propitiated at all important religious functions *Mannukaran* makes the offerings on behalf of the clan members both on specific occasions prescribed by custom or at an emergency following the request for such a nte by the members of the group whose well being needs to be assured

Mannukaran 's hut will be considered as the *peikoora* (ancestor's hut), where their ancestors reside and are installed in the inner room of the hut The idol of ancestor made out of bamboo / reed or carved in wooden piece is placed in a clay pot (*pei satti*) along w ith dry grams of *rai* and *same*[7] These grams are said to be produced by their ancestors during their time The grams are of ritual value so that during the first sowing ceremony, a little amount of these grams will also be mixed along with other grains by the *mannukaran* In some hamlets, especially at Thaze-Abbannoor, the idol of the ancestor will be placed in big dry bottle-gourd known as *churakka* In addition to these grains a handful of dry paddy grams which was believed to be cultivated by their ancestors at *mothakadavu*[8] farm near kadukumannu *ooru* will also be kept along with the idol in almost all the *mannukaran 's* hut The ancestral pot, *peisatti,* will be hanged to the roof in a secret corner of the inner room How ever, the spirit and power of the ancestors exist in all huts of the clansmen and they believe that the power of their *pei* exist mainly near the kitchen hearth (*mathilu*) and bamboo baskets for storing dry grains (*gulume*)

Though every *koottam* is known after a particular founding ancestor and is considered as their major ancestral spirit, there are also other ancestors who are

worshipped and propitiated at the time of festivals and ceremonies. The people say that the latter stand in the relationship of classificatory agnatic brothers of their founding ancestors. But they are unable to trace the correct genealogical link between these ancestors The name of ancestral spirits worshiped, including the founding ancestors, in four Muduga hamlets are as follows .

Thazeabbannoor *Manchipattan koottam* - Manchipattan, Killapattan, Eruve pattan, Kurumba Pattan, Baradi pattan, Sonka nathan

Meleabbannoor *Pallipatan koottam* - Pallipattan, Kunnia Pattan, Ganiyapattan, Kulla Pattan, Sokki Pattan

Kallamala *Pooja pattan koottam* - Pooja pattan, Thumma Pattan, Thanni pattan, Bhoomi pattan, Paccha Pattan, Sora Pattan, Bheema pattan

Chittoor *Paccha pattan koottam* - Paccha pattan, Nadappu pattan, Vanchinadu pattan, Mudavan pattan, Naga pattan, Maniya pattan

Ceremonies related to first sowing *(betha ideel)* and first harvest of crops *{thodu)* are occasions when the entire *ooru* jointly participate in the function as a single corporate unit The *mannukaran* officiates the rituals connected with the agricultural practices in the *ooru* and he is expected to have adequate knowledge of the fertility of the soil as well as the seeds to be sown in particular season The *mannukaran* select a particular date for the first sowing and first harvest and only after performing the ntual sowing of seeds by the *mannukaran,* the people start sowing in their respective farmlands All the members residing in the *ooru* (agnates as well as non-agnates) are obliged to abide by the rules and norms of the *mannukaran* related to the fertility cycle On all these ceremonial occasions such as *betha ideel* (first sowing , *soppu thodu* (first harvest of green leaves and first weeding ceremony), *rai thodu* (first harvest of *rai,)* and *same thodu* (first harvest of *same),* people participate together in the ceremony. Crops are not supposed to be harvested by anyone of the *ooru* unless the *mannukaran* performs the first harvest ntual of crops On the *thodu* day, the *mannukaran* is having all nght to harvest the crop from any farmland of the *ooru* to do the ceremony and to prepare food for the ntual offenngs to the ancestral spirit.

Every member of the hamlet whether agnate or non-agnate using the clan land for cultivation has to abide by the rules and norms related to every calendncal agricultural

rites. Even if the non-agnates are residing in the farmland away from the hamlet, they participate and celebrate the sowing and harvest festival on the same day along with the agnates of the hamlet. Their support and participation in these ceremonial occasions are made evident by cleaning the front-yard of their huts and plastering with cow dung and also by keeping away from all sorts of agncultural activities on that particular day.

Ancestral gods are thought native to the land and are worshiped by every member at every calendrical agncultural rite They propitiate the ancestors to enrich the fertility of the soıl and to ensure a good crop yields for the coming harvest season These ceremonial offenngs made to the ancestors (*pattan*) at the tıme of *thodu* and other festivals reinforce the unity and integration of the *koottan* through the synthesizing power of ntual All the agnates wıll assemble ın the *mannukaran's* hut and participate ın the ceremony headed by the *mannukaran* Food made of *same* or *raı* (depending on the crop for which the *thodu* ıs performed) ıs offered ın plantain leaves to all the ancestors Thıs ıs called *mattu vakkal* After keeping the *mattu* m plantain leaves m several rows of seven each, the agnates assemble and the *mannukaran* wıll call their ancestors *Mannukaran* addresses the ancestral spırıts by chanting their name and are invited to accept their offerıng *{mattu)* and to bless them A ritual communion follows the ancestral offenngs All the agnates can have a share of *mattu* offered to their ancestors, but non-agnates and women are not allowed to have share of the *mattu*

The ancestors are clearly conceived to exercise an overall control and can influence for good or evıl on their own descendants People always assert that no harm or illness can befall them ıf their ancestors are watchful enough, for they have power to ward off all evıl and misfortune Ancestors are appealed to and thanked for good yield, fertility of soıl and all their fortune and success. In return, the ancestors safeguard community welfare Ancestors are thought to be particularly sympathetic to the people and hold responsibility for the welfare of clan members. The desire to be remembered and given regular offenngs ıs attnbuted to the people, and ancestral spırıts may themselves cause harm and sickness to descendants who neglect them. Worshiping of clan gods gives the entire clan members a feeling of oneness and functions to strengthen the notion of descent and bnngs an element of group solidarity.

Other than the *moopan* and *mannukaran,* the council of the *ooru* consists of other two position - *bandari* and *kuruthala,* who are assistants to the *ooru moopan* It is the duty of the *bandari* m looking into the affairs of the people and informing it to the *moopan* He acts as a mediator between the people and the *moopan* *Bandari* is also referred by the people as *moonathavan*meaning 'thirdman, since he acts as a mediator in settling disputes among agnates of the *ooru* In the *panchayath,* it is the *bandari* who proceeds with the case and it is his duty to find out the guilty after a prolonged deliberation The *kuruthala* functions as a second assistant to the *moopan* and informs issues and other matters in the *ooru* to the *moopan* The office of the *bandari* and *kuruthala* vests with the *Jathikal*[9] i e , non-agnates settled in the *ooru* Particularly the *bandan* will always be an affine to the agnates of the *ooru* and act as third man and proceed with the case without showing any partiality whenever there is dispute among the agnates of the *ooru* People often say that it is the duty of the *jathi* to pursue matters of disputes and arrive at a peaceful solution

It has been discussed already that in an *ooru,* the *moopan* will have the political power and control over all the residents of the hamlet irrespective their clan affiliations In other words the authority of the *moopan* cut across the clan boundary and he is considered as the headman of the local group, the *ooru,* as a whole

The *mannukaran* of an *ooru* though have a final say over all its residents utilizing the land and other resources of the territory in religious contexts especially with regard to ancestral worship, do not hold sole control over the entire *oorukarar* But on the other hand have religious authority over and manages the ceremonial affairs of the clan members only The co-resident non-agnates though join along with the agnates and participate in agricultural activities and other functions of the *ooru,* will detach from the agnates of the *ooru* with regard to their ceremonies and rituals and aggregate along with their clan members in their natal land

Thus it can be said that the power and authority of an *ooru moopan* extends to the entire residential settlement / hamlet irrespective of the clan affiliation of its residents Whereas, the *mannukaran* represents mainly the descent group and enjoys power and control over all its descent group members irrespective of their residence

Patrilineal descent determines succession to status and inheritance to property between men and thereby continuity in the male line is stressed Succession is through the male **line, i.e., from** father to son and the position *of moopan, mannukaran, bandari* and *kuruthala* are succeeded (primogeniture) by **their** sons A man chooses **his** eldest son as **his** successor who has to continue **his** father's title **and** status and honour **his** father's debt and make good **his** bequests The successor of the *mannukaran* should achieve knowledge about the ancestors, and prayers recited dunng ntuals from **his** father and do offerings to the clan ancestors on behalf of the **patrilineal** descent group Thus a vertical succession of titles and position is favoured among the Mudugas However, on certain cases, when a man die without a true successor or **if his** successor and heir is a small child, younger brothers will occupy the position Sometimes in the absence of brothers, any other close **agnatic** member of the *koottam* will be given the position This will be temporary for a shorter period until the real successor grew up, after which, he has to step down and the true successor occupies the position At Thaze-Abbannoor hamlet, when Manchi *moopan* died, his two children were very young to take up the position of *ooru moopan* Hence Manchi's classificatory father's younger brother Mallan was made the *moopan* of the *ooru* for a short penod Later when the children grew up, Mallan gave up the position of headman (*moopu*) and the youngest son chekidan was made the *moopan* Since the eldest sor Kal ki was staying away from the hamlet, he was not given the position

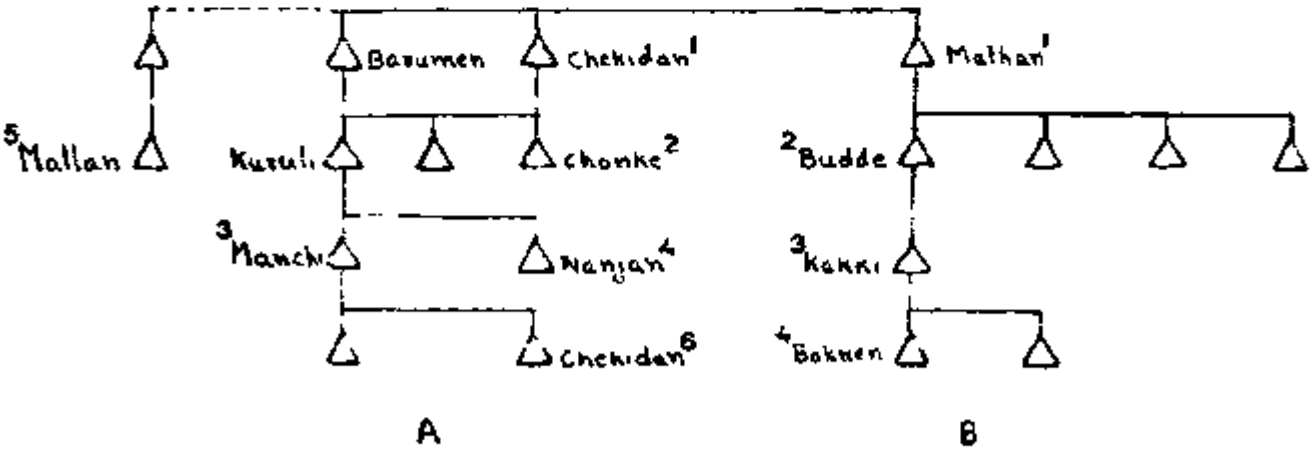

Fig 3 3 Genealogy showing the inhentance of a) *moopan* and b) *mannukaran* at Thaze-Abbannor (numencals indicate the order of inhentance)

Though land is owned communally by the local descent group, families have right to clear the land, burn the bushes and cultivate it according to their capacity, and hence the land under cultivation is managed by families Since land is available in plenty, there is no open competition among them for this and the notion of individual ownership is weak Even now they consider it as wrong on their part to hold independent *pattayam* from the village office for their farmland However, the land cleared and cultivated by the father will be inherited by the male children Thus brothers have a common claim on their father's land They or their sons take over the land cultivated by a brother who is having no children Other properties like hut, catties, agricultural implements etc , will also be inherited by the male children Female children inherit ornaments and other personal belongings from mother and grand-mother On certam cases married daughters and their children or immediate affines can reside in the *ooru* and a portion of their land with the consent of the *moopan* and the council members This right to reside and farming of land is, however, not permanent, and in the event of any disputes and quarrel, they are forced to leave the land and the hamlet A permanent alienation or loss of land to the outsiders is unconceivable to the agnates of the *ooru*

Naming of children follows the patrilineal rule Usually grand-parent's and great grand-parent's names are given to the children according to sex through a name giving ceremony called *peru pidishu athu* The child will be made to cry while the elder members go on chanting the names of the ancestors one after the other to the child's ear The particular name chanted when the child stopped crying will be given to the child

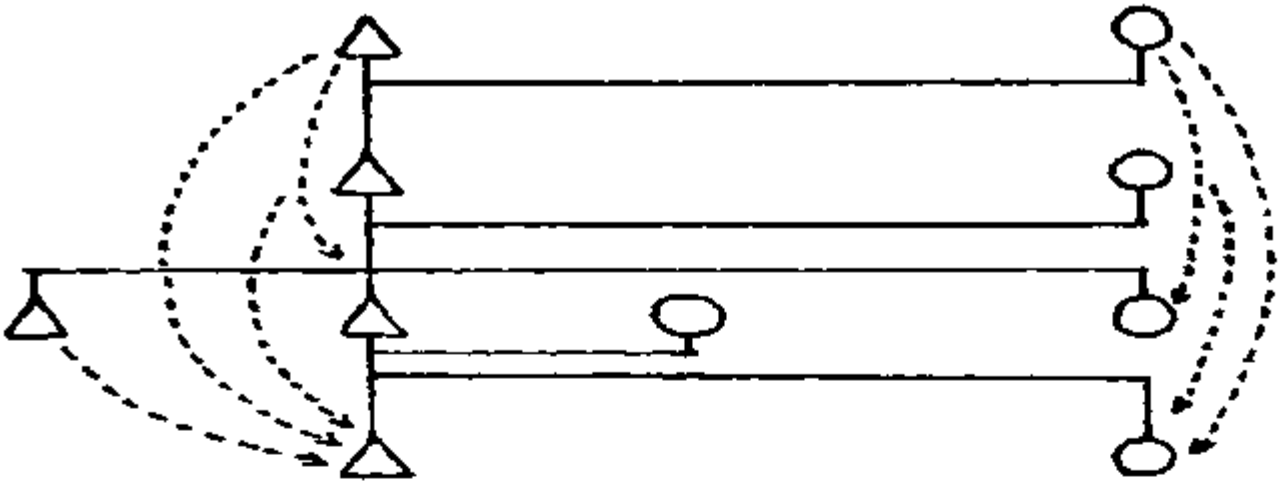

Fig 3 4 Pattern of inheritance of name

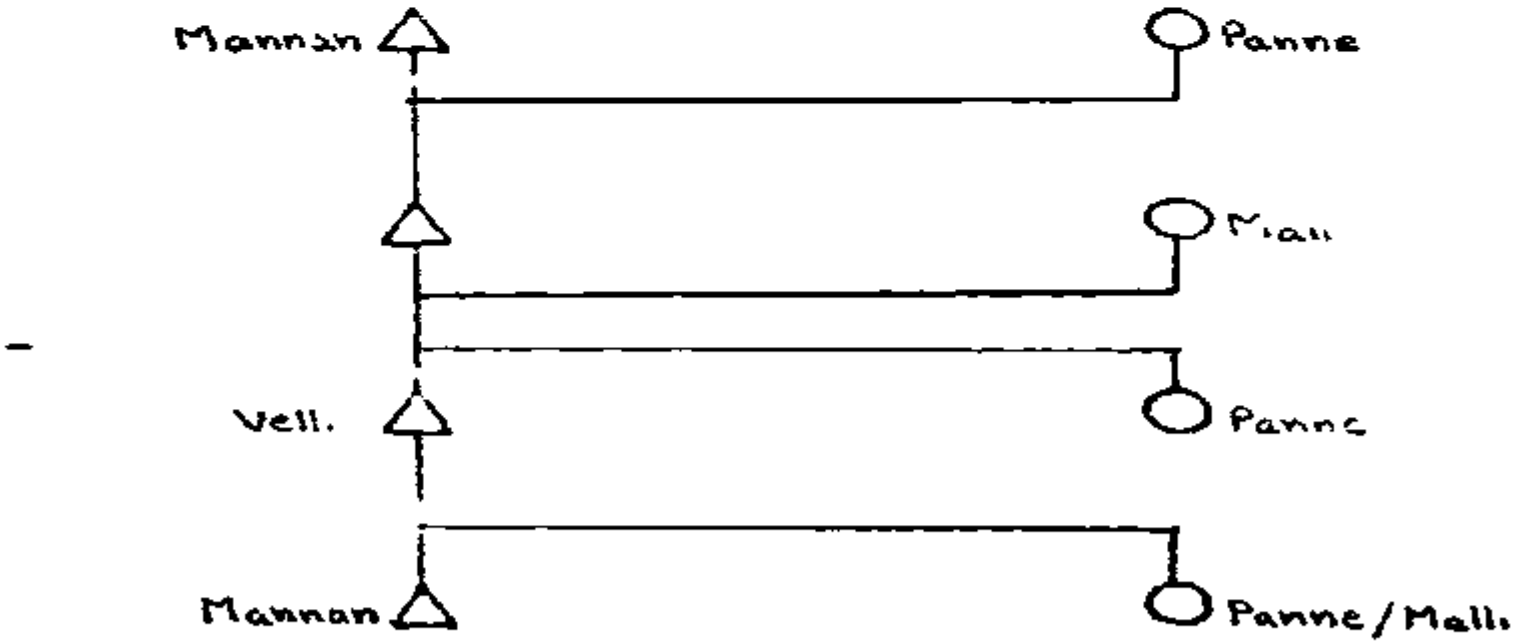

Fig 3 5 Inheritance of name in Velli's family

A male carries three names : name of the hamlet where he is permanently residing, his father's name and his personal name. For eg , a typical full name of a male Muduga reads Anakkal kuppen Man where Anakkal stands for his residential hamlet, Kuppen stands for his father and Man is his personal name

Organization and composition of local descent group :

The structural pnnciple of patnlmeal descent assigns the agnates with the nght to reside on their clan land followed by a rule of virilocal residence All clan members have the birth right to reside on their natal land where their ancestors have lived, died and buried Men marry and establish their families remaining in the locality of their fathers such that a particular patnlmeal descent group gets localized and persist through the generation The *ooru* and its land is the traditional property of the particular descent group and its members whose ancestors were believed to be the founders But this does not make for rigid membership in local group or exclusive use of land only by the descendants of the founders There exists a disparity between the ideology of patnlmeal descent and the composition of local descent group The word *ooru* refers to units in which the 'property group' (though some members enjoy only usufructuary right in land) and the 'residential group' are congruent, 1 e , having identical membership, and is organized on the basis of a patrilineal descent ideology Ideally, the *koottam* and *ooru* should be coextensive[10] such that the rules of descent, property, and residence are inextricably interlinked However, due to vanous social and economic factors, all the members of a *koottam* cannot always form an exclusive property / residential group, and the members at times migrate to other hamlets becoming coresidents in that land Agnation is the real structuring pnnciple of local descent group and the people do have the notion that members should reside along with their agnates in their natal land and cooperate and participate with them in their economic and religious affairs Local groups or hamlets are not restricted to agnatic descendants only They are also permitted to kinsmen from other descent groups or *koottam* Non-agnates and affines with the consent of their relatives and the permission of *moopan* become established co-residents, build huts, clear lands and cultivate and participate in the social events associated with the *ooru* The nature of their residence,

land use, participation, and involvement shows that agnation is the primary but not the only means of membership in a local residential group - the *ooru.*

It should be noted that co-residence among the Mudugas is based on prior kinship bond and mere residence cannot create new kinship relation Outsiders who are not at all related are never given membership into the local group as co-residents Even if kinsmen are permitted as co-residents of the hamlet, the nght to land is never considered permanent at any cost and the complete loss of land property to outsiders is objected by the agnatic members of the hamlet If at any instance of disputes between the agnates and non-agnates, they are forced to leave the hamlet and seek shelter in their natal land However, if a person uses his close affme's (MB, ZH or WB) land for cultivation and resides with them for a long period, his children also can continue cultivating the land which he has cleared

These non-agnates residing in the local group enjoy nght in the use of land and other spatially fixed resources of the natal group The hamlet where people reside together, co-operate and interact in their everyday life is the residential group, and since descent forms the basic principle of organization, it can be said as a local descent group Nevertheless, the agnates form the core group of the hamlet and most corporate actions are centered on this core group which is the 'dominant descent' group[11] owning the hamlet and its land traditionally from their founding ancestor However, this dominance of descent group is not based on any status or power or the numerical size, but based on the traditional claim o\er the hamlet and its territory believed to have inherited from their ancestors who were the founders

As long as they stay in a particular hamlet, they are said to be the full members of that hamlet or local group with regard to nght to in the use of farmland and other resources of the local group [12] Thus in one case, Chellan of Karuvara hamlet, who nas married the sister of Kakki from Thaze-Abbannoor is residing along with his family at Thaze-Abbannoor in close interaction with his affines Earlier, at the time of Chellan's manage, his father-in-law, Budde had given him sufficient land to cultivate and wanted him to settle there at Thaze-Abbannoor Now, Chellan's daughters were married to the agnates of Thaze-Abbannoor hamlet and are residing there at Thaze-Abbannoor itself Moreover, Chellan's two sons also married from Thaze-Abbannoor and are co-residents

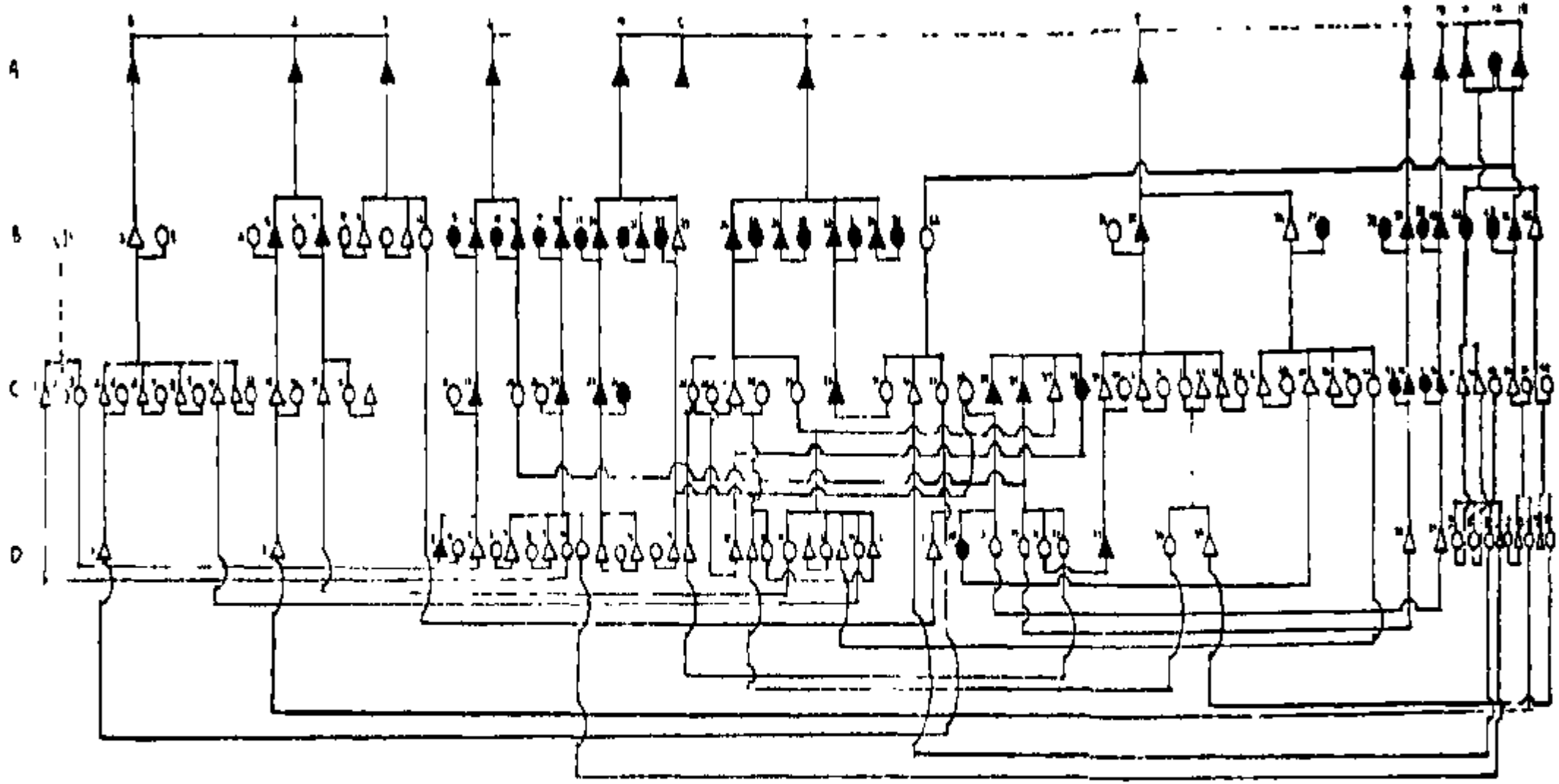

Chart showing the genealogical composition of the Rockefeller family

Mathan's another grandson's (Mathan) (C30) wife Chelli (C31) who is a widow residing in the hamlet along with her younger siblings and mother Malli (B32) (who was married to Veetiyoor hamlet) Malli's brothers are Chatan (B44) and Nanjan (B 45) who are agnates to Thaze-Abbannoor, and Chatan's son Panali (C60) is followed by his son Murugan (D43)

Mandi's eldest son Mullan (B35) is having three sons, Kaden (C39), Velli (C41) and Panali (C45) and a daughter Vellachi (C43) mamed to Nanjan (C44) of Anakkal *ooru*, who is the *Kuruthala* of Thaze-Abbannoor Nanjan's daughter Beere (D34) is married to Kakki's son Murugan (D19) Mullan's younger brother Ooshi (B36) has three sons Kali (C47) Velh (C49) and Chiriyan (C50) and one daughter Kuppe (C52) married to Panali (D24) and is staying in the hamlet

Three brothers Karimen (C35), Chatan (C36), and Chellan (C37) who have come and settled from Karuvara *ooru* represents the *paruthimalapattan* and are affines to Thaze-Abbannoor Their younger sister, Vellachi (C38) was married to Kakki (C27) (first marriage) and Kakki's younger sister, Rami (C29) was married to Chellan (C37) Karimen have one son, Vella (D27) and two daughters, Neeli (D28) married to Velh (C49) and Vellachi(D29) married to Man (D37) son of Choken (C56) After Karimen's death, his wife Chathi (C34) was married by Chonke (B23) and she is now staying along with him Chathar (C36) married Bokken's (B16) daughters Malli (C20) and their eldest daughter Vellachi (D30) is married to Kakkihnkan (D36) and younger daughter Karimi (D31) married to Kaden's son Ramaswami (D33) Malli (who is a widow) is now staying at Thaze-Abbannoor along with her daughters Bokken's (B16) and his elder brother Velh (B14) represents the *killapattan koottam* at Thaze-Abbannoor Velh is having two grand-sons, Mathan (D3) and Bokken (D5)

The descendants of Velh (A1), Kurumban (A2) and Veeran (A3) represents the *Kurumbapattan Kottan* residing at Thazeabbannoor Velli's son Mallan (B2) have five sons, Vellinkiri (C4), Maruthan (C6), Velli (C8), Enyan (C10) and Veeran (C11) Kurumban's descendants are Rangan (C13) Kali (C15) and their sister kurumbi (C16) married to Nanjappan (C17) of Pottikal hamlet staying at Thaze-Abbannoor Veeran is having two sons, Kali (B9) and Linkan (B11) and their sister Vellachi (B12) married to Vella is residing in the same *ooru*

Kuruli's (B20) half-sibling, Malhan's (B18) son Kuppen (C22) married Ragi from Chitoor and he is now followed by Ramanan (D7) and Chellan (D9) Kuppan's two daughter's Mathi (D10) married to Kullan (C1) of Mele-Abbannoor and Maruthi (D11) married to Chathi's (C59) son Kullan (D41) are also residents of Thaze-Abbannoor Kullan's (C1) mother Kurumbi (B1) is also staying along with him at thazeabbannoor.

Nanjan's (B45) sister Malli's (B42) children, Velli (C57) and Aiyappan (C58) from Kattakadu *ooru* are also non-agnates residing at Thaze-Abbannoor Velli is the *bandari* of Thaze-Abbannoor and both Velli and Aiyappan have married Chathi's (C59) daughters Chati (who was married to Mele-Abbannoor) is now staying along with her elder daughter Nanchi at Thaze-Abbannoor and her younger daughter Laxmi (B40) married to Chellan (C32) is also a resident of the *ooru* (Children are not represented in this genealogy)

An analysis of the numerical composition of Thaze-Abbannoor hamlet shows that out of the 48 married male residents, 21 belong to the main clan *Manji pattan kalu*, and 27 are non-agnates Of the 26 non-agnate males, 12 are in the affinal category and 15 are considered parallel relatives Among the 59 married female residents, 46 belong to other descent groups and 13 are agnates residing in their natal land itself Of the 46 non-agnate females, 8 were residents of the same hamlet before marriage The numerical composition of different descent groups at Thaze-Abbannoor according to the number of marned males are as follows

Descent groups	No of marned males
Manchi pattan	21
Kurumba pattan	11
Killa pattan	2
Vandichindan	2
Paruthimala pattan	3
Kozhichellan	4
Palli pattan	2
Kattakadu *koottam*	2
All i ram an	1

The above statistics clearly shows that among the Mudugas, in addition to the agnates who form the core of the hamlet or local group, there are also non-agnate kinsmen recruited as coresidents into the local group who enjoy usufructuary nght in land

The right which a person has to land in his own natal *ooru* differs, though not much, but in certain aspects from the rights he has to land in his mother's or wife's or other affines hamlet where he is a co-resident In the hamlet where he is residing as a non-agnate, he has nght only to land 'owned' by his close affines and he cannot as such cultivate any land anywhere as he wishes He is having certain restrictions as to the selection and cleanng of land, though not always but atleast in the initial phase of his co-residence In his natal *ooru,* he is not only having nght to the land which his father owned, but if he needs more and is available, he has a nght to clear the land he needs On the other hand, in his affinal hamlet, he enjoys less freedom compared to his natal land and faces restriction in clearing any land he wishes However, a long penod of stay in the affme's hamlet cleanng and cultivating the land gives him nght and claim on land but not similar to that of the agnates of the *ooru* This nght and claim is only temporary, and moreover, this is with regard to use and not to anything else, and they can never be permanently mhented

When patrilineal descent forms the basis on which agnates are aggregated together on their clan land, the non-agnates are recruited as co-residents on the basis of strong affinal bond or other matrilateral relations The affines, even after generations of co-residence and holding of nghts in land, remain identified as affines retaining their roles and obligations It should be mentioned here that , this distinction or separation as affines and agnates forms the underlying structural principle of Muduga social system which is depicted in all their social, economic and religious activities Thus, when the *moopan* and *mannukaran* who are agnates of the land enjoys the political and religious power and control over the members, it is the *bandari* and *kuruthala*, the affines of the land, who assist the *moopan* in dehvenng his duties, and the *bandari* functions as the mediator (*moonathavan*) in settling disputes among the agnates of the hamlet Thus, this co-existence of agnates and affines and their mutual co-operation and symbiotic relationship forms the very basis of Muduga social organization

The non-agnate co-residents are immediate affines only for a few members of the hamlet, and for others they are distantly related But the kinship terminology could be readily extended throughout the *ooru* such that any two members of the *ooru* are in some category of kinship relationship to each other Thus members of a local residential group are all related to one another One can trace kinship to any other person either through a direct tie or through a third person Within this local group, the links are definite and well known The classificatory system of kinship terminology works in such a way that all the residents of the entire hamlet are divided into two major categories — *annna-thampi* category (parallel relatives) and *macha-maman* category (cross relatives) This classification placing all agnatic members into one category as 'brothers' represents their agnatic solidarity in all undertakings

It is significant to mention here that, the co-resident non-agnates (who are not affines) after a long period of stay will be considered or given the status of *anna-thampi* category to the group with which they reside However, they will not be fully assimilated into the agnatic core of the *ooru* This points out the fact that, for non-members (strictly non-affmes), co-residence for a longer period is a sufficient condition for this gradual com ersion into the category of *anna-thampi* The case of Mallan and his close kin reveals this aspect of change in status as parallel km Though Mallan and his relatives are permanent residents of Thaze-Abbannoor, their ancestors were originally from Kmnakara hamlet and they do not have any agnatic link with the core descent group of Thaze-Abbannoor How ever, they are now considered as *anna-thampi* category by the agnates of Thaze-Abbannoor and are treated almost like agnates, eventhough not fully assimilated into the descent group There is a myth which clearly reveals the coming of Mallan's ancestor *Kurumbapattan* to Thaze-Abbannoor and also showing how the *kurumba pattan koottam* got assimilated into the *anna-thampi* category

During those olden period, Kurumba pattan and his relatives w ere w ell known for consuming buffallo meat Beef was a major part of their daily diet such that they need atleast one buffalo per day which they managed by stealing from the cattle shed of a nearby *Konkan* (local term for a Tamil group) When this became a regular practice, the *Konkan* realized that someone is taking away the buffaloes and decided to find out the culpnt One day the *Konkan* visited the Kurumba pattan's hamlet and found a small boy

whose stomach was full and heavily bulged. On asking the boy what was inside the stomach, he immediately said that it was full of buffalo meat Realizing the culprit, that night the *Konkan* stood near the cattle shed in disguise, and when the Kurumba pattan came to take away the buffalo, he chased him back. Out of fear, that the *Konkan* would kill him for the theft he has already done, the Kurumba pattan decided to run from the hamlet Thus he ran away from the hamlet to a distant place by carefully stepping on big rocks so as to escape from the Konkan following his foot-pnnts He reached Thaze-Abbannoor hamlet and took shelter there At that time the wife of Thaze-Abbannoor pattan saw him and she immediately went and told her husband that an unknown person had entered the hamlet On asking about his details, he revealed the entire story without hiding anything After listening to the narration, Thaze-Abbannoor pattan got convinced with Kurumba pattan, felt pity for him and allowed him to stay along with him in the hamlet Moreover Thaze-Abbannoor pattan assured him safety and gave word that he and his people will always be in his back for every affairs From then onwards they lived as brothers and joined hands in all the socio-religious activities in the ooru This relationship between the two ancestors are still followed by their descendants and is reflected in their ceremonial occasions when a member of the *Kurumba pattan koottam* join with the mannukaran of the *Manchi pattan koottam* in performing ntuals during ceremonial occasions in the *ooru*

The patrilineal descent rule and virilocal residence makes a person to reside in his natal land co-operating and participating along with his agnates But at the same time it is to be mentioned that a person maintains close relationship with his mother's *koottam,* and links through mother are for some purpose recognized and important, though they are considered fundamentally different from links through the father One makes frequent visit to his mother's brother and assist and help him in various activities Dunng olden days, if a man is proposed for his MBD, he has to stay along with his mother's brother and should do bride-service (*pennu-vela*) for his mother's brother's family for about three to five years [13] This long penod of stay helps him to develop close relations with other members of his mother's hamlet and he also gets well acquainted with the land and its hunting and foraging areas He erects a new hut nearby his mother's brother and starts his new family At the same time he continues to do service for his mother's brother's family

and will be assisted by his wife in all his endeavors If there develops a strong intimacy between him and the members of his mother's brother's hamlet, he will be allowed to stay there as long as he wish But usually after a penod of three to five years, he comes back to his father's place and reside along with his descent group members Similarly, he is having right to stay along with his father's sister's family if he wishes to marry her daughter Thus it is important to note here that this practice of long penod of bnde-service and stay in the affine's hamlet makes for the prevalence of co-residence of non-agnates in the *ooru* Though people reside along with the members of his affme's hamlet for a long penod and develops close and intimate relationship with those members, and participate in all socio-economic activities of the *ooru,* he will not be assimilated into the agnatic group, rather remains as an affine to the hamlet and deliver the duty assigned for the *jathikal*

When people due to certain economic as well as social reasons go and reside in their affinal land for quite a long penod, and fail to come back to their native hamlet for years, they cease to maintain any frequent social interaction with their clan members in their natal land Nevertheless, dunng ceremonial occasions like marriage, death and ancestral worship, they are obliged to visit the natal land and co-operate with their agnates in carrying out the ceremonies Though the day to day co-activity and participation is very weak, they try to sustain their agnatic link through these sporadic visits and co-operation and keep the tie renewed through generation and never let to break their link with the natal land After a long period of stay outside *ooru,* usually people develop a sort of desire to come back to their natal clan territory *{jammam or seema)* so as to die and get buned in the grave yard of his natal hamlet where his ancestors rests This desire is strongly expressed when they say "*emma vayasattu, ini emnt ellum mullum emithu seemakku vannetheaom*' (we have become very old and now our bones should come to our natal land)

Kuppan of Mele-Abbannoor was staying uxonlocally with his wife at Boodar *ooru* He had spent a major part of his life time at Boodar and married out all his daughters while at Boodar When Kuppan and his wife became very old, he had decided to return to his natal land along with his wife When asked, Kuppan replied that he was staying away from his natal land most of his hfe time and now his time has reached and

his only desire is to spend the remaining part of his life in his land, die there and get buried in the grave yard of his native *ooru*

Women who are sisters and daughters to the male members of the descent group are considered agnatic members of the descent group by virtue of birth Until marriage, they stay along with their father and brothers in their natal *ooru* and participate as full members of the group Through marriage women born to the group are given out to other clans, and women from other groups are taken in as "wives" and "daughter-in-laws" Since a woman after mamage settle along with her husband in his natal land, she transfers her main worship to that of her husband's *pei-koora* (ancestor's hut) and the associated ancestors and joins with them in ancestral ceremonies and ntuals During marriage, the bride should first visit the pei-koora of her husband's group along with the groom and offer prayer, by which she is introduced to the ancestors of her husband's *koottam* But it is to be mentioned here that, though women are married out to a different group, their relationship with their natal group never ends and at times when in need are eligible to use the land and residence in their natal *ooru* Women are allowed to worship their ancestral god and to participate in the major ancestral festivals held in their natal land This relationship becomes stronger and are renewed during these occasions where the married out women folk are obliged to come to their natal land and participate with their agnatic members These married out women referred as *petta-pillai* (female children) are expected to contribute their share to the bride-price of their agnatic members and also for the seeru (dry-funeral) celebrations in their natal land as *petta-pillai panam* (female children's money) Even if she fails to attend the function, her son's are obliged to represent her in the function at her natal land and contnbute the *petta-pillai panam* on her behalf

According to rule, women are expected to live with their husbands in his natal land But there are occasions when the couples opt to live with the wife's natal descent group Convenience, preference, strong kinship obligations and other factors of personal choice are active forces which bring about this movement to affinal land Married couples or families may use the farm land of their close kin in nearby hamlets for one or two years of cultivation If the land is nearby to their residential locality, a shift of residence to the new land is not necessary They can work in their farm land and come back to their

hamlet everyday But if it is too far away for daily convenience, a temporary or long term move and the construction of new hut may be involved After a period of stay in the new land, he and his family get adjusted with other members of the *ooru* and assimilated into the system becoming a functional part of the local residential group

These tendencies may be illustrated by means of two cases The first one is that of Raman of Anakkal *ooru* who has married Pariah's classificatory sister (father's brother's daughter) from Thaze-Abbannoor Raman is cultivating a portion of his brother-in-law, Panah's farm land at Thaze-Abbannoor Since Anakkal is near to Thaze-Abbannoor, Raman is looking after his farm land without becoming a resident of Thaze-Abbannoor After the farm work, in the evening, he and his wife will go back to their own hamlet But when the crops had matured and the flowering season started, he erected a small hut (*sala*) in the farm land itself and shifted his residence so as to watch the crops from birds and wild pigs He stayed there for about four months till the harvest was over

Similarly, Nanjan of Anakkal ooru who has married Ramanan's sister Chelli from Thaze-Abbannoor was doing farming in Thaze-Abbannoor land as a non-resident Only dunng the final stage of the crop he erected a hut in the farm land, and stayed there with his family for three to four months until the harvest was over

In yet another case, Velli who is a member of Anakkal *ooru* was cultivating a portion of the farmland of his wife's father Chellan, a non-agnate co-resident of Thaze-Abbannoor During the initial stage of the cultivation, Velli was staying at Anakkal *ooru* itself and w as visiting the farm land often But later, he shifted to Thaze-Abbannoor and stayed along with his father-in-law Chellan Still later in March 1997, he has erected his own hut nearby Chellan's hut and started his independent household Now he has become a resident of Thaze-Abbannoor

In certain other instances of frequent quarrel and family disputes, a woman separates from her husband and come back to her natal land to seek shelter in her father's or brother's hut Later, she will be allowed to cultivate a portion of her father's or brother's farm land and can establish her independent household Her younger children will be taken care by their mother's brother or mother's father who later develops authonty and control over them But this is temporary for a short period until the husband and his agnates approach claiming the right Similar is the case if a woman becomes

widow in her early years of marriage. However, in both the cases the women tend to come back to her natal land if she is without bearing children or the children are of tender age. If the children are grown up and have established their independent household, the mother tend to seek shelter under them instead of going back to her father or brother.

Though agnates and non-agnates reside together in one hamlet for years and co-operate in socio-economic and political activities, difference of opinion do often arise between them and leads to conflicts and disputes These tensions and conflicts will be suppressed to a certain extent by the tribal council leaders through *panchayath* meetings and prevent the explicit outburst leading to an apparent split Under certain circumstances, these tensions lead to open conflict and end in the clear cut cleavage or fission of the two groups If the dispute is between two *koottam,* usually the non-agnates are forced to go out from the land and seek shelter in their natal clan land or any other *ooru* where they have a strong kinship base At certain times, the faction of non-agnates may split away from the agnates of the local group and establish separate residential unit a little away from the mam *ooru,* but in the same territory They build up their new huts and inturn develops into a small hamlet This split or separation is not only in the case of residence but can also be visible in the intensity of co-operation and participation m other socio-religious and economic activities There are instances where the split away group do not observe the agricultural rites and other ceremonies along with the members of the main hamlet Sometimes they may not recognize the status and authority of the council members of the main group and establish new council members of their own In certain cases, the new faction may even seek the help of the council members of other neighboring *ooru* at the time of ceremonial occasions and *panchayath* meeting Thus Kaden and his close relatives of Mele-Abbannoor hamlet are staying away from the main hamlet and have stopped all sorts of religious and economic interaction with Mele--Abbannoor after having heavy quarrel and clash with the agnates of the hamlet Now that, for any important functions and *panchayath* meeting, Kaden's *koottam* are seeking the help of the *moopan, bandan* and other council members of Thaze-Abbannoor

However, in most case, though the new group establishes their new residence away from the main *ooru,* and reduces the intensity of interaction between the mam group, they never form a fully autonomous group They will still continue as part of the

main hamlet and consider themselves under the religious and political control of the main hamlet They continue to cultivate the land and use resources of the same hamlet and its land Vellara *ooru,* another split away section of Mele-Abbannoor, is a small hamlet consisting of Chekidan, his sons and close affine and is situated away from the main *ooru,* but in the territory of Mele-Abbannoor Eventhough they lack frequent interaction with the main *ooru,* they consider themselves as part of Mele-Abbannoor and participate in all ceremonies along with the main *ooru* and are also under the political jurisdiction of the mam hamlet

Quarrel or conflict between individuals may develop into a form of group rivalry since each individual or family will be supported by their closest agnatic kinsmen This may lead to a clear cleavage or fission in the hamlet Disputes or quarrel can arise among agnates or between agnates and non-agnates residing in the same *ooru* It is the responsibility of the *bandari* of the *ooru* to interfere in this matter, bringing it to the notice of other council members and settling the dispute through *panchayath* headed by the *moopan*, and preventing the conflict in reaching into a split Disputes are caused due to individual fights, property damage, claim for religious right, right regarding farm land, marriage issues, adultery etc When the conflict is between two different groups or between two separate *ooru,* the mass involvement is high The incident arouses suppressed hostilities and the entire group members aggregate together for an attack On these occasions there is no evaluation of rights or wrongs, the other side is the enemy, attacker or guilt and the mass action is in revenge for many past injuries, insult, losses or sorcery and the aim is to chase out the enemy from the land

The term *ooru* has often a residential and not an exclusive descent connotation Even non-agnates who are residing permanently for a long period will be known after the name of the hamlet where they are residing as *oorukarar* If asked about their clan or descent group, they refer to themselves as members of so and so hamlet where their father belonged as agnatic member People say, "*emma kattakkadu kaarar, ennu appanthu jammam vannu kattakkadu*",(we are kattakkadu people, kattakkadu is my father's natal land)

Nevertheless, there is an agnatic core to the hamlet community and this core is the dominant descent group which owns the hamlet and its territory Since all the members of

a clan never reside together or aggregate into a local residential group and agnates go out and live in other groups, all the clan or *koottam* members always cannot gather and co-operate together in all their economic and social activities Descent members collect together as corporate unit only during ancestral festivals and other ceremonial functions These are occasions when the notion of agnation culminates and descent members abstracted out and thereby depicting their group solidarity, cohesion and unity Evans-Pntchard has correctly emphasized this aspect of descent for the Nuer when he writes, "in daily contacts between persons within the community their relations are expressed not in the language of descent structure but in the language of the kinship system by reference to categones of kinship within that system" (1951 23) Thus among Mudugas descent members are articulated as groups of agnatic km at a different, usually ritual level of social life

Operation of descent ideology _

Though the actual behaviour pattern of the people deviates to a certain extent from the ideal rule or structure and appears to be 'loosely structured' with regard to the composition of local descent group, it is important to note that, there is always a clear, consistent and deeply rooted descent ideology (descent construct) of the people which operates when the notion of differentiated agnation becomes crucial and thereby descent members are clearly differentiated and separated out We will now look into some of these aspects

We have seen divorced women returning to their natal land along with their children In such cases, the children will be taken care by their mother's father or mother's brother and they establish control over the children and may even claim for the bride-price of the female children How ever the patrilineal descent ideology operates and becomes crucial Such that, the right of the father over the children never cease, but remains, and he can retain the right on paying an amount called *saakukooli* towards the guardian for taking care of the children and bringing them up They have a deeply rooted agnatic notion, such that the people never want to loose right over the children In the absence of father, it is the immediate agnates of the child's father who take the

responsibility, and the entire right on the child will be with these close agnates who have the obligation to arrange the child's marriage

A father acquires proprietary rights in his children, and his children are accounted members of his clan if he makes the full marriage payment to his wife's relatives [14] But if he or his clan members fail to make the payment, then his wife's descent group 'can have' a right over the children However, the people never allow to happen in such a way and the father or his agnates retain the right over the children by payment of bride-price to the wife's group Here the lineal ideology of the descent group extends wider enough to hold its members within its fold, and never let the collateral principle to override A person becomes a member of a descent group by ascription and it is the descent group which is having the right to claim him and the right is said to lie with the group as a whole The claim on proprietary nghts in the children is not an aspect of choice, but it is strictly restricted to the agnatic members of the father's clan which is established through bride-price payment made at the time of marriage or at a later stage or even at the time of the death of either father or mother

The case of Chelli's children highlights the priority of father's agnates regarding the nght on children After the death of Mathan of Thaze-Abbannoor, his wife Chelh and her children are staying along with her brother Chellan (who is also residing at Thaze-Abbannoor) and are under his care In 1996, due to the spread of cholera, Chelh's two daughters died and Chelh and Challan received an amount as compensation from the State go\emment But some of the *oorukarar* questioned the nght of Chellan in receiving the money, saying that the actual right of the money goes to Kakki, who is Mathan's classificatory elder brother Moreover, it was Kakki who paid the *pariya-panam* (bride-price) of Chelli at the time of Mathan's death They are of the argument that Chellan is only *mamam* (MB) for the children but Kakki is *bahappan* (FeB) and hence he is having the real claim and if at all Chellan needs some money, a small share can be given to him as *saakukooli* for taking care of the children after Mathan's death (see Fig 3 7)

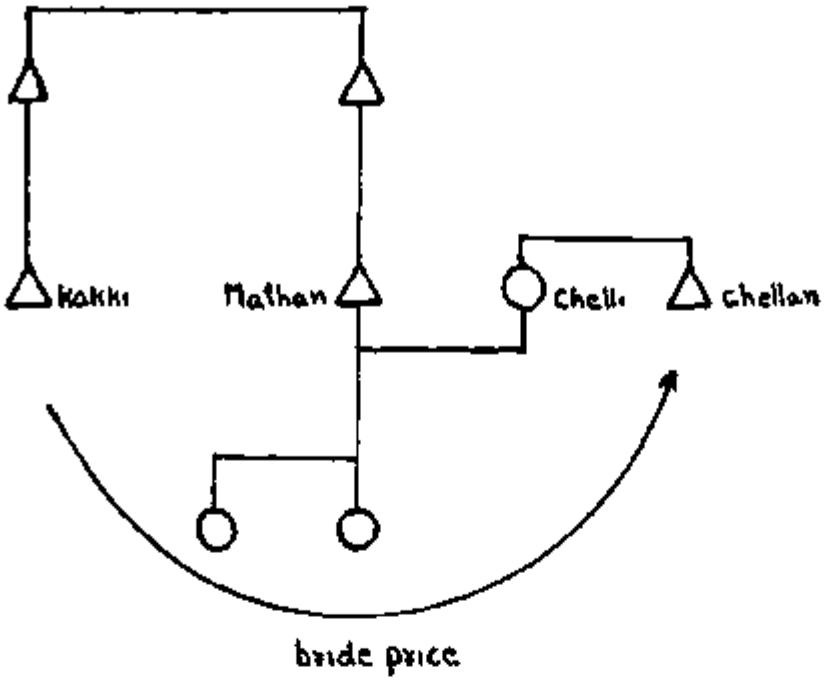

Fig 3 7 Bride price payment of Mathan

Even though non-agnates are allowed to stay in the *ooru* and live as co-residents for a longer period, one important aspect to be noted is that, after death, the body of the non-agnates will be taken back to their natal land for burial But in certain cases, if the distance to his natal land is more and finds it difficult to transport the corpse, burial will be done in the graveyard of the hamlet where he was residing An amount of money as *mannupanam* (land price) will be collected towards this from the close agnates of the dead Even though the body of the co-resident non-agnates at certain circumstances was buried in the grave yard *(chudala)* of the *ooru* where he was residing, it will not be assimilated into the 'world of the ancestors' of the agnates of the *ooru* and their bones will not be pooled together or clubbed along with the agnate's during the dry funeral ceremony *(bara savu or seeru).* Instead, their bones will be taken by their agnates to their natal *ooru* at the time of their dry funeral, after paying a fee called *ellupanan* (bone price) and will be buried in the *gobbe* [15] of his clan

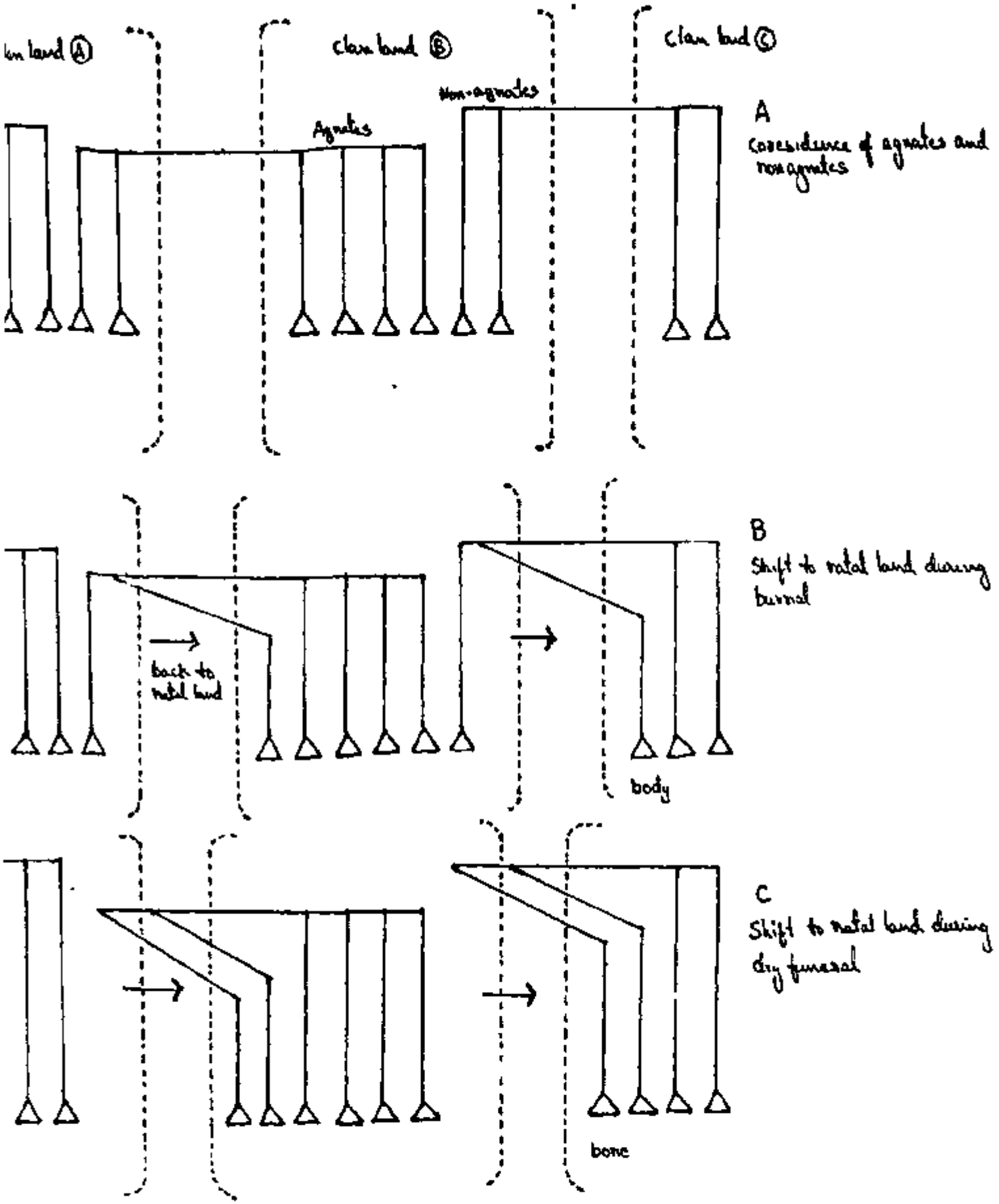

Fig 3 8 Co-residence of agnates and non-agnates and the shift of natal land dunng bunal and dry-funeral

There are certain cases where the agnates fail to come at the correct time and claim the right of the body of their clan member who died while residing in other *ooru* During this circumstances, the body will be buried in the graveyard of the hamlet where he / she was residing and the *oorukarar* will arrange the bride-price payment, if it is not payed on behalf of his / her agnates and thereby claim a temporary right on the deceased and his / her children till the actual owner come forward However they have no right in assimilating the soul of the deceased with his / her ancestral spirits, which could be carried out only by their respective agnates through a ceremony called *nigaal nokkal*

A case in support of this is of Maruthan's sister Maruthan who is a native of Ommala hamlet married from Anakkal and is residing uxonlocally at Anakkal His younger sister Chelli, has been rnamed to Mele-Thodukki *ooru* But after her husband's death, she came to her brother Marthuan and was residing at Anakkal When Maruthan's sister died, nobody from her husband's hamlet came to pay the *pariya-panam* and to take back the body Thus Anakkal *ooru moopan* who is also Maruthan's wife's brother. collected the *pariyam-panam* on behalf of Anakkal *ooru* and gave it to Maruthan, thereby taking the right of the children and the mother's body The body was buned in the gra\ eyard of Anakkal *ooru* But however, the *nigaal nokkal* ceremony was not performed by the Anakkal people Anakkal headman, Kalamoopan says that even though they paid the bride-price and claimed the right, it is not at all permanent, they have only 'adopted' them and it only temporary He says, "*emma anakkalkarar makkane bakanju bachineru* meaning, "we Anakkal people have just fenced the children" The children's father's *koottam* from Male-Thodukki are the real owner and in future they will definitely claim right on the children and their mother's bone on paying the bride-price towards Anakkal people only The agnates have the actual right to join her soul with the soul of their ancestors through *mgaal nokkal* which will be performed dunng the pacha savu (green funeral) ceremony at Mele-Thodukki

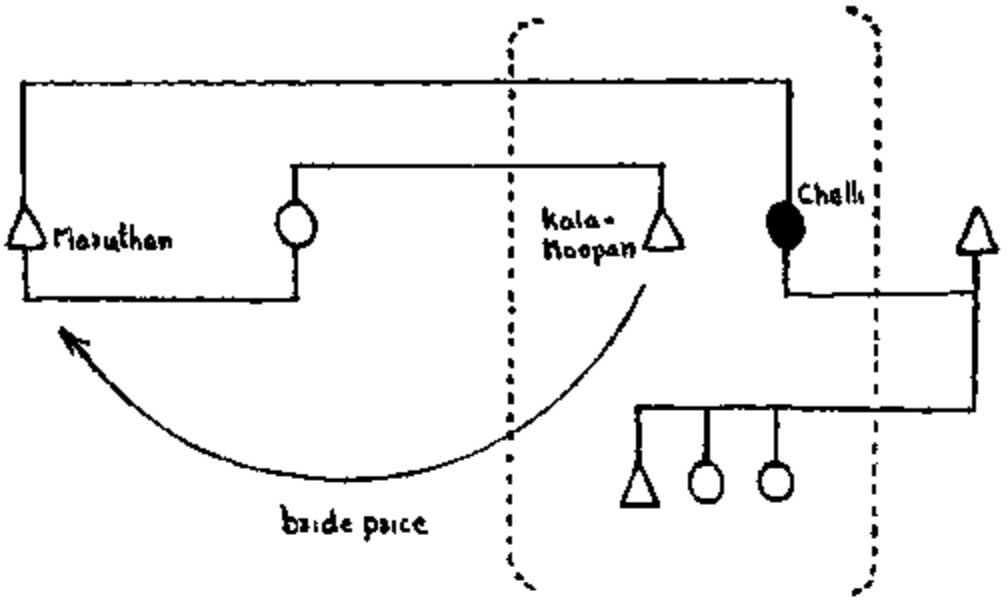

Fig 3 9 Temporary right on the mother's body and the children attained by Anakkal *ooru* on payment of bnde-pnce

Now w e w ill look into the process of *nigaal nokkal* ceremony among the Mudugas which clearly depicts the sharp and strong agnatic distinction employed by the people through which clan members are separated out and assimilated into the ancestors after death

Nigaal nokkal is a ceremony performed after the burial by which the soul (*nigaal)* of the deceased is incorporated into the 'world' of ancestors This is done by the elder agnates of the deceased and for a woman by her husband's agnates After the bunal is over, one among the close agnates, usually the eldest one will take two stems of *dharbha* grass (a wild variety of grass - *Poa cynosuroides*) One will be green representing the deceased and the other will be dry which represents the ancestors After chanting the name of the deceased and the respective ancestor, the two stems will be dipped into the earth on the head part of the grave and will be taken back This is called *nigaal kuthi edukirathu* After this, all the relatives gathered in the graveyard proceed back to the *ooru* A measure (*padi*) filled with water will be placed infront of the particular hut by a close female km Those who have come back from the graveyard will gather round the

measure to perform the *nigaal nokkal.* The *dharbha* stem will be made into small bits of about one inch length and after chanting the name of the dead one, the green bit will be put into the water, after that the dry bit will be dropped into the same water representing the ancestor They then watch whether the two grass stems are coming close and join each other If it gets joined, it shows that the particular ancestor has received the soul *{nigaal)* of the deceased, if not, they assume that the particular ancestor is not receiving and will abandon that grass bits and repeat the procedure once again, this time in the name of another ancestor Thus the procedure continues till the two grass come close and join together which symbolizes the union of the dead one's soul and the ancestor's spirit In the case of a man, his *niggal* will be received by his agnatic ancestors like father, father's brothers or father's father For a woman, her *nigaal* will be assimilated with the spirit of her husbands paternal ancestors The union of the dead one's soul with the spirit of a particular ancestor shows the 'nearness or likeness' of that particular ancestor and the deceased

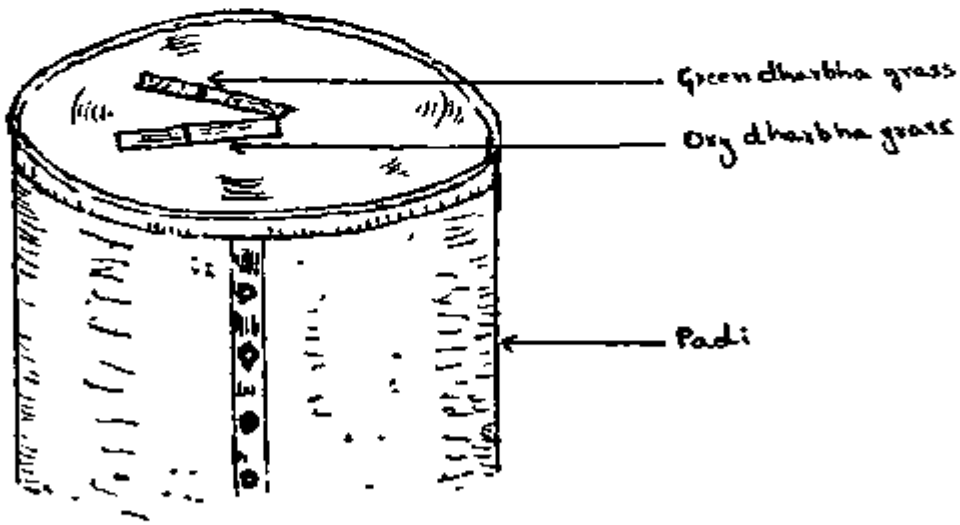

Fig 3 10 Performance of *nigal nokkal*

The bride price payment or *pariya-panam ketrathu* made at the time of marriage or at the death of either of the spouses or even during *seeru establishes* the right in the wife by her husband's descent group. Unless the *panya-panam* is fully paid, the husband's *koottam* do not have any nght to bury her corpse and they cannot claim for her bone dunng dry funeral (*bara saw)* Thus if the *pariya-panam* is not fully paid, the remaining amount is paid at the time of death or even later at the time of dry funeral and the nght on the wife is thus retained The payment of *panya-panam* (bnde-pnce) is made through a *panchayath* consisting of the council members of the hamlet and elder kinsmen of the husband and wife Once the bride-price is transacted, the bride's *jathi* (third-man of bride's group) will take the hands of the children and mother and give it to the hands of the immediate agnate of the husband This symbolically represents the transfer of nght in the wife and her children to the husbands group the significance and importance of this symbolic event is revealed through a case at Anakkal hamlet

Dunng the funeral ceremony of Kalamoopan at Anakkal hamlet, *Panchayat* was held for the payment of the remaining bnde-pnce The bnde-pnce was paid by Kalamoopan's agnates to his wife's agnates from Thundoor hamlet However, after the bnde-pnce payment, Kalamoopan's wife was seen crying aloud lamenting and cursing herself and was not able to control Seeing this, her relatives gathered and tried to console her When asked, she revealed that, after the payment of bnde-pnce to her agnates, nobody took her and her children's hands and gave it to her husband's agnates, to symbolise the transfer of their right to her husband's *koottam* Moreover, she complained that, since this symbolic transfer of nght was not enacted, she and her children was not properly accepted into her husband's *koottam* and feared that they may loose membership in her husband's *koottam* in future

However, the elder members from both the hamlet tried to console her and assured that Anakkal *kozhichechellan* (*kurunagar*) *koottam* have taken the nght on her and the children will take care of them without leaving them This incident shows the strong and deeply rooted descent ideology of the Mudugas

This payment of *panya-panam* recruits the wife to the clan's corps of ancestor spirits In a sense it completes the assimilation of the wife into her husband's descent group posthumously Before death, women are not fully assimilated into their husband's

clan and their status will be that of affines viz-a-viz her husband's group.[16] Raymond Firth's remarks regarding the status of Tikopian women holds good here. Firth writes, "the best way of expressing her position is to say that on the one hand for formal privileges she remains a member of her clan, but on the other for economic and social co-operation she is included in the group of relatives of her husband (1965 317) This continuity of affinal status of women even after marriage could be very well depicted and justified in cases where women after husband's death are remained into the same *koottam* or clan

During the *seeru or bara savu,* the bones of the dead will be taken out from the graveyard and will be rebuned in the sacred rock cave called *gobbe* after performing a prolonged ritual for 3 to 4 days in the *ooru* The bones (particularly the collar bones) of all the agnates buned in the grave yard since the celebration of the previous *seeru {bara savu),* will be unearthed from the grave by their respective kinsmen headed by the *mannukaran* The bones of the agnates who were residing in other *ooru* and got buned there will also be taken out and brought to the natal *ooru* for the obsequies The first agnate to be buned in the graveyard since the celebration of the previous *seeru,* (no matter where he is buned, whether in the natal *ooru* or in the graveyard of the *ooru* where he was residing) will be considered as the 'founding corpse' *{thalakodi savu)* The name of this particular person, whether a child or a female, should be remembered by the *mannukaran* till the next *bara savu* ceremony is performed By ntually addressing the name of the *thalakodi savu,* they believe that the spirits of the other agnates will also be assimilated together into the group of paternal ancestors and no clan member's spints will be left out even if they fail to dig out the bones or remember the names Thus at Thaze-Abbannoor, the *thalakodi savu* for the next *seeru* is Panah's (C60) father's younger brother Naduvani's wife who was residing at Anavai *ooru* and got buned there in that grave-yard Mudugas believe that the spints of agnates recognize each other and collect together in their natal land wherever they are buned which strongly depicts the agnatic integration of ancestral souls

The *nigaal nokkal* ceremony introducing the soul of their agnates into the fold of ancestors and the elaborate ceremony of *bara savu* which involves the digging of bones of agnates and burying it in the *gobbe* (rock cave) after several obsequies depicts a strong

and deep rooted patrilineal ideology employed by the Mudugas These are ceremonial contexts through which their patrilineal descent dogma becomes more apparent separating out their agnates, and these agnatic concept transcends into and continues in the 'other world' also

A person's membership to a descent group is not based on the principle of coresidence and need not involve any individual choice regarding his descent group membership [17] It is the descent group itself which is having the primary right to claim its member, and the membership is strictly restricted giving no choice to the individuals Thus according to Goodenough, "individual choice disappears when a person has a duty to be a member of a group or when a group has the nght to claim him as a member When a person finds himself as member of a group by ascription the nght may be said to lie with his community as a whole, and his is the corresponding duty to comply with the community's rules" (1973 59) Among the Mudugas, a person becomes a member of a group by ascnption and it is his duty and responsibility to abide by the group's rules and norms A person's descent membership cannot be changed because it is a part of the way the society is ordered Fellow clansmen owe one another help and hospitality because they are the same kind of people Beyond this, a person can extend his labour and loyalty to the members of the *ooru* with whom he is residing Even though he is an operative member in another *ooru,* he does not lose his nghts in his natal clan where he is thought really to belong and to which he almost always returns in a later stage

It is to be mentioned here that though the non-agnate co-residents cannot claim permanent nght to land and other ritual status, the non-resident agnates arguing from descent, retain permanent nght in land and ntual authonty as being descendents of the ancestor who originally owned the land The co-resident non-agnates through their holding of usufructuary nghts in land and participation in economic and social events with the agnates of the local group, denve an identity based pnmanly on locality It is significant to mention here that, even after generations, the ties of co-residence will never be converted into the ties of descent, thus treating identity through locality and identity through descent as independent of each other The non-members may only become identified as a separate descent group attached to the core descent group associated with the given locality.

Due to the dispersal of clansmen into other *ooru,* there always appear to be two kinds of agnates based on their residence and intensity of corporate activity. Thus there are agnates who are co-residents and who co-operate and participate in all their daily socio-economic affairs, and agnates who are non-residents and co-operate only during important and specific occasions like ancestral festivals Since the second category of agnates rarely visit their natal clan land, their intensity of corporate action is weak compared to the former At this point it is to be mentioned that like women who are dispersed to other clan land through alliance, men are also dispersed to neighbouring groups from their natal land But there is always a difference between these two, because for women their membership in their husband's land is permanent and they are absorbed into the descent group of husband after death But for males, their residence is 'temporary[1] and are not assimilated into the agnatic group of the *ooru* where he is residing

The living members of a clan are strongly influenced by their ancestors and there is always a sort of ritual contact between the descendants and the ancestors through the *mannukaran* The ancestors are remembered, worshipped and offenngs made by the clansmen in having an overall control and influence on their descendants and thereby the agnatic link is maintained and renewed through generation Similarly, land which is another ancestral property is also controlled and influenced by ancestors by enriching the fertility of the soil and giving good yield The land, trees, burial grounds, house sites etc , are associated with their fore-fathers (*Pattanar*) and ancestral spirits, and the fertility of the farm land and the yield of crops is associated with them The burial ground (*chudala*), the ancestral hut (*peikoora*) and the second burial cave (*gobbe*) etc , become the dwelling places of ancestral spirits whose support ensures success

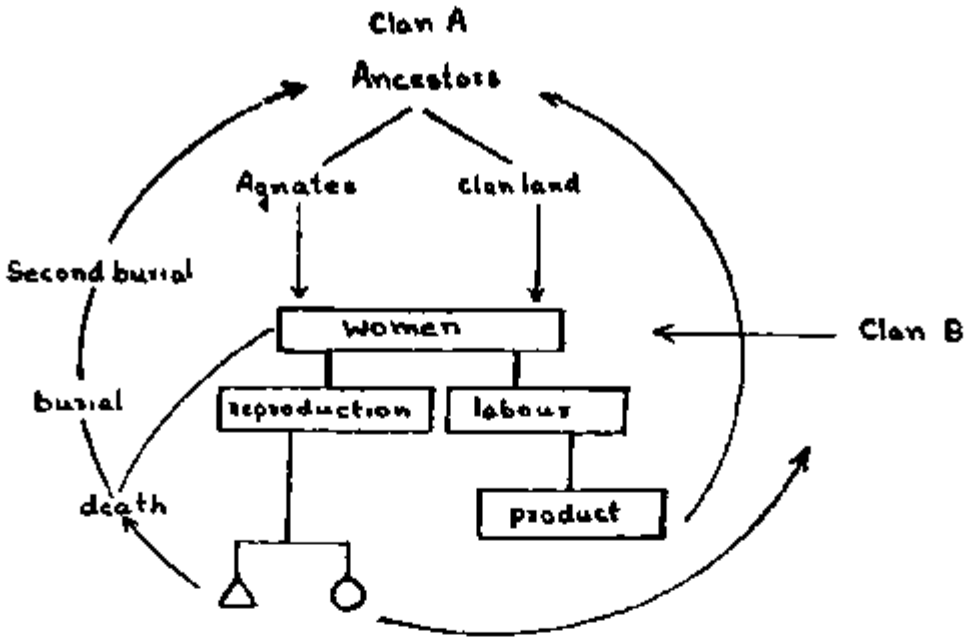

Fig 3 11 Cycle involving the regeneration of land and people

The natural cycle involving the regeneration of land and people is the domain of woman which expresses fertility Thus the process of reproduction and production is presided over by women who have come from other clan land The fertility of women provides the clan with sons and daughters Likewise, the dimension of cultivation and the making of farmlands are the major responsibility of women whereby good yield is produced Though a major portion of yield is consumed by the clan members, it is a product of land which is an ancestral property and hence it is reciprocated back through ritual offerings made to the ancestors Similarly, the agnates live in the clan land, die, get buried in the clan's gra\eyard and their souls (*nigaal)* are taken back and assimilated into the ancestral world Thus the cycle representing the regeneration of land and people is completed

A long period of stay together by the agnates and affines will never makes for the incorporation of co-resident affines into the agnatic core of the hamlet, rather a strict and clear distinction between these two categones is maintained which is depicted through their varied roles and obligations forming the basic structural principle for the functioning of the Muduga society, and this distinction endures through generation Nevertheless, in relation to other outsiders, the entire members residing in a local group are referred as one in the name of the *ooru* as *oorukarar* And, in daily contacts between persons within the community, their relations are expressed not in the language of descent structure strictly,

rather people consider each other as equals and distinctions are only made through terminological usages Thus, in a general sense, when a hamlet is thought as a unit, it is not as an agnatic group but as a local group based on a particular descent group However, reference to clan or descent group are made in context as to particularize an exclusive group of agnatic km in a different, usually the ritual level pertaining to the groups ancestors and associated ceremonies This makes the descent members aggregate together as corporate unit through which the strong underlying pnnciple of patnlmeal descent ideology is brought out Thus, discussing on the Nuer descent, Evans-Pritchard correctly points out, "it is the clear, consistent and deeply rooted descent structure of the people which permits persons and families to move about and attach themselves so freely, for shorter or longer penods, to whatever hamlets they choose by whatever cognatic or affinal tie they find it convenient to emphasize" (1951 28) Though in the actual behavioural level the Muduga local descent unit appears flexible and loosely structured, making people attain membership into any hamlet very freely, it is to be noted that on the other hand there is always a firm and deeply rooted descent ideology or 'descent construct' which helps to keep the structure of the society firm and avoid causing confusion or social disintegration

NOTES ·

1 The term *pattern* refers to ancestors and also to the kin type- great grand-father

2 Some of the *kulams* found among the Mudugas of Attappady are *Kartika kulam, Bellaka kulam, Kuppa kulam, Armoop kulam, Kurunagar kulam,* etc

3 Goodenough (1962 1973) has emphasized the importance to differentiate between 'localized kın groups' and 'kınstructured local groups' and argues that anthropologists have always looked at residential groups pnmanly as kın groups and only secondary as local groups According to hım ıt ıs common for local groups to be organized as descent groups rather than descent groups being localized

4 Among the Mudugas there are no evidence of totemıc association of descent groups either towards any plant or towards any particular animal However, the Mudugas identity a particular vanety of plant as *muduga thonda {Jatropha curcas)* though ıt has no significant ceremonial or rıtual value Thıs identity given to thıs particular plant ıs to distinguish ıt from another vanety of plant of the same family, called *kota thonda (Rıcınus communıs)*, the oıl of which ıs believed to be a favourite ıtem used by Lord Ranaganathan and so also by the Irulas, hıs followers, wıth whom the Mudugas maintain a strong social taboo

5 It ıs important here to clearly define and make distinction between terms such as agnates, non-agnates, affines and consanguınes which are used ın thıs thesis Agnates are members of a descent group shanng a common descent ideology traced from a common ancestor through male lıne Non-agnates are all those kinsmen who are not members of ones own descent group Thıs category hence, include relatives both marriageable (cross-relatives) and unmarrıageable (parallel relatives) Affines are persons related to ego by a marriage lınk and include kinsmen who are ın marrıageable relation Consanguineous are kinsfolk related by descent or filiation Thıs category of kın also include parallel relatives and even affine's affine through the rule of terminological extension or kın classification

6 Though these terms are used simultaneously to refer their clan gods, there is slight variation in the sense and meaning *Pattan* is a kinship term used to refer great-grand father or ancestors, while the term *pet* particularly refers to God highlighting their supernatural quality *Karudaivam* is a general term used for clan gods by the tribal people of Attappady

7 Variety of millet (graminaceous plants) bearing large crop of small nutritious seeds *Same* is the common Guinea corn (*Panicummillaceum*) *Rai* is *Eleusinecoracana* or *Cynosures coracanus* much grown in India, Africa etc

8 According to Myth, there existed a farmland by name *mothakadavu* near kadukumannu *ooru* During olden period their ancestors happened to cultivate a variety of dry land paddy in this area The strange and powerful quality attached to this paddy is that, it took just only one day and one night for their ancestors to complete the entire process, i e , ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, and milling of the grains and getting it cooked The people attnbute high ntual value for this paddy grams and they believe that an amount of this *mothakadavu* grains were distributed to every hamlet and they still preserve a handful of it in their ancestral hut

9 The term *jathikal* refers to affines, but it is used in a restncted sense for co-resident affmes who participate and co-operate in most activities along with the agnates of the *ooru* *Jathi* is the singular form and *jathikal* is plural

10 The custom of assigning the position of hamlet assistants (*bandari and kuruthala)* on the affines must have developed due to the practice of members becoming, as co-residents in their affinal hamlet

11 The usage "dominant descent group" refers to the original inhabitants who traditionally own the land and terntory from the founding ancestors (also used by E vans-Pritchard 1951)

12 Keesing's account of the Kwaio (1970) distinguishes between the nghts of the agnates and non-agnates and argues that the agnates who are descendants of the founding ancestors have "primary nghts" but the non-agnate co-residents have only "secondary nghts" including use nghts in the descent group's estate

13 Among the Mudugas, there is no terminological differentiation between patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousins and both are equally preferred Traditionally, marriages were through bnde-service and ıt was performed for marrying patnlateral as well as matrılateral cross-cousins irrespective of their genealogical closeness However, thıs custom of bride-service ıs not common now-a-days

14 The major function of *parıya-panam or pennu-panam* (bride price) ıs not only acquinng of propnetary nghts in children, but nght ın both the wıfe and the children together even ıf the payment ıs made at a later stage These functional aspects of marriage payment among patnlineally organised societies have been emphasised by anthropologists (see Fortes 1962)

15 Gobbe ıs the small sacred rock cave where bones of the ancestors are buned at the tıme of dry funeral ceremony or (*bara-savu*) or the *seeru*

16 Refernng to Lewis's companson of unılıneal descent groups (Lewis 1965), Barnes (1967) remarks that the fact that women are not completely "owned" by their husband's group has been interpreted ın two dıametrıcally opposite ways – either as a sıgn of strong patrılıneal descent, or as a symptom of weak patrılıneal descent

17 Firth (1963) has distinguished between "definitive systems*' of descent, ın which the individual has no choice of membership, and "operative systems", ın which the individual has choice